

**AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS:**

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (previously presented) A label for product containers comprising:  
first and second elongated webs of heat shrinkable material;  
a splice member adapted to overlap a terminal end portion of each of the webs  
with the webs arranged in an abutting relationship, the splice member comprised substantially of  
heat shrinkable material; and  
an adhesive coating on a surface of the splice member for securing the splice  
member to each of the first and second webs.

Claim 2 (previously presented) The label according to claim 1, wherein the splice  
member is transparent.

Claim 3 (previously presented) The label according to claim 1, wherein the splice  
member comprises a polyethylene film.

Claim 4 (previously presented) The label according to claim 1, wherein the label  
webs are from two separate label rolls.

Claim 5 (currently amended) A heat shrinkable label for product containers  
comprising:

at least two elongated webs of a heat shrinkable laminate, each web provided with  
a continuous series of printed labels thereon, the labels positioned end to end along each web,  
each web having opposite side edges defining a width, a leading end and a trailing end; and

at least one elongated, clear, heat shrinkable splice tape having top and bottom  
surfaces and an adhesive on the bottom surface, the adhesive adhering the splice tape to a portion

of one web adjacent the leading end and to a portion of another web adjacent the trailing end such that the splice tape extends transversely to the webs across a majority of the width defined by the webs to form a continuous web,

each of the webs and the at least one splice tape being bi-directionally shrinkable such that it has a shrinkage percentage in each of orthogonally oriented directions defined by it, the having bi-directional shrinkage characteristics percentages for the splice tape selected to provide longitudinal and lateral shrinkage percentages for the splice tape that are substantially equal to respective lateral and longitudinal shrinkage percentages for the webs such that, upon application of heat to a label each continuous web and the adhered splice tape, the bi-directional shrinkage of the continuous web label substantially matches the bi-directional shrinkage of the adhered splice tape and such that the continuous webs shrinks along with the adhered splice tape without causing substantial distortion to the printing on the associated labels.

Claim 6 (previously presented) The heat shrinkable container label according to claim 5 wherein the splice tape is adhered to the ends of the webs over the printing thereon.

Claim 7 (previously presented) The heat shrinkable container label according to claim 5 wherein the laminate material of the webs comprises a polypropylene film.

Claim 8 (previously presented) The heat shrinkable container label according to claim 5, wherein each of the webs comprises a laminate of two plies of polypropylene film.

Claim 9 (previously presented) The heat shrinkable container label according to claim 5 wherein the material of the splice tape comprises a polyethylene film.

Claim 10 (previously presented) The heat shrinkable container label according to claim 9 wherein each of the webs comprises a laminate of a polypropylene film.

Claim 11 (previously presented) The heat shrinkable container label according to claim 5 wherein each web is provided on a separate roll.

Claim 12 (withdrawn) A method of labeling a product container comprising the steps of:

providing first and second elongated webs of heat shrinkable label material each having opposite sides defining a width, a leading end and an opposite trailing end;

providing a heat shrinkable splice tape including an adhesive on a surface defined by the splice tape;

aligning the trailing end of the first web with the leading end of the second web such that the ends abut one another;

adhering the splice tape to a portion of the first web adjacent the trailing end and to a portion of the second web adjacent the leading end to extend transversely to the webs across a majority of the width defined by the webs so as to form a continuous web.

Claim 13 (withdrawn) The method according to claim 12, wherein the splice tape is transparent.

Claim 14 (withdrawn) The method according to claim 12, wherein each of the provided webs comprises:

a first laminate of heat shrinkable material;

an adhesive in contact with the first laminate;

ink in contact with the adhesive; and

a second laminate of heat shrinkable material in contact with said ink, the first and second laminates having substantially equivalent shrinkage characteristics.

Claim 15 (withdrawn) The method according to claim 14, wherein the splice tape and each of the laminates of the webs has bi-directional shrinkage characteristics selected to provide longitudinal and lateral shrinkage percentages for the splice tape that are substantially equal to respective lateral and longitudinal shrinkage percentages for the webs.

Claim 16 (withdrawn) The method according to claim 12 wherein each web is provided on a separate roll.

Claim 17 (withdrawn) The method according to claim 12 further comprising the step of winding the continuous web onto a roll.

Claim 18 (currently amended) A label for a container comprising:

first and second web segments of heat shrinkable material, each web segment having opposite first and second end edges defining a length therebetween;

the second end edge of the first web segment juxtaposed to and aligned with the first end edge of the second web segment; and

a splice tape including a heat shrinkable portion defining a surface and a coating of an adhesive on the surface, the splice tape overlapping a portion of each of the first and second web segments adjacent the aligned end edges, the adhesive coating of the splice tape securing the splice tape to the first and second web segments to form a single continuous web,

~~the length of the first and second web segments forming a selected to provide a heat shrinkable container label having a closed cross section of sufficient size for receiving the container a predetermined perimeter length when a portion of the first web segment adjacent its the first end edge of the first web segment is secured to the second end edge a portion of the second web segment adjacent its second end edge.~~

Claim 19 (previously presented) The container label according to claim 18 wherein each of the web segments defines a first surface and an opposite second surface and wherein the splice tape is secured to the first surface of the web segments.

Claim 20 (previously presented) The container label according to claim 18 wherein each of the web segments defines a first surface and an opposite second surface and wherein the splice tape is secured to the second surface of the web segments.

Claim 21 (previously presented) A label for a product container comprising:

first and second elongated label webs each having a terminal end portion; a splice tape comprised substantially of heat shrinkable material, the splice tape adapted to overlap a terminal end portion of each of the first and second webs with the webs arranged in an abutting relationship; and  
an adhesive layer for securing the splice tape to the terminal end portions of the first and second webs.

Claim 22 (previously presented) A heat shrinkable label for a container comprising:

at least two elongated webs each including a heat shrinkable laminate, each web having opposite side edges defining a width and a continuous series of printed labels thereon, the labels positioned end to end longitudinally along each web, each web having a leading end portion and a trailing end portion;

an elongated splice tape having a length and opposite side edges defining a width and comprised substantially of heat shrinkable material; and

an adhesive coating on a surface defined by the splice tape, the adhesive coating securing the splice tape to the leading end portion of one web and to the trailing end portion of another web such that the splice tape extends transversely to the webs across a majority of the width of the webs such that a continuous web is formed.

Claim 23 (currently amended) The heat shrinkable label according to claim 22 wherein each of the webs and the splice tape have longitudinal and lateral bi-directional shrinkage characteristics selected to provide percentages in longitudinal and lateral shrinkage percentages directions and wherein the shrinkage percentages are selected for the splice tape that are substantially equal to respective lateral and longitudinal shrinkage percentages for the webs such that, upon application of heat to the splice tape and adjacent portions of the webs, the bi-directional shrinkage of the adjacent portions of the webs substantially matches the bi-directional shrinkage of the splice tape to substantially limit, printing distortion due to differential shrinkage between the splice tape and the adjacent portions of the webs will be substantially limited.